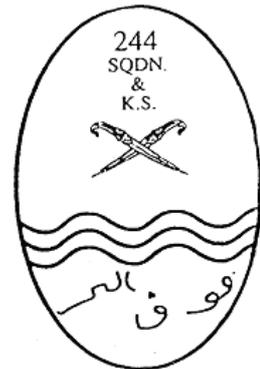




244 SQUADRON & KINDRED SPIRITS ASSOCIATION



Newsletter No. 7

NEW MEMBERS (paid up) since Newsletter No, 4

Jim Swann, Wolverhampton; Colin Richardson, Masirah; Lionel Martin, Bristol; Arthur Brook, Didcot; Peter Stonelake, Torquay; Jim Bradley, N. Ireland; Bob Topping, Southport; Sid Radford, Troon; Frank Cropper, Southport; Jim Faulkner, Walsall; Jack Hill, Weybridge; Arthur Winter, Egham; Hector McKinnon, Southport; Bob Aindow, Southport; Harry Woodward, Tamworth; Bob Bragg, Sutton Goldfield; Arthur Le Sadd, Canvey Island; Alan Summerbell, Sevenoaks; Tack Earnshaw, Blyth; George Morgan, Folkestone; Bill Westwood, London; Francis Stothard, Thirsk; Tom Davy, Cumbria;

From Jim and Don

Although our present Nominal Roll (including enquiries) numbers 154, in fact the current paid up membership is 90, and this after constant reminders. After this issue, non-payers will cease to receive further Newsletters (heavy cost of printing and postage).

Now, to the coming 'big do'. We have yet to attain our target of 100 in attendance at the banquet. We are presently stuck on 86 definite bookings. Any members who live within driving distance are invited to the Saturday banquet at £15 inclusive (contact Don). Come on lads, the more the merrier!

As you can imagine, we are now in high gear in preparation for the Reunion. We will endeavour to make the event as good, or better than 1991. Programme details are below, BUT Jim says, Friday. Jaw, jaw, jaw with your old mates, interspersed with buffet, a few competitions and videos..Saturday - Banquet, followed by all singing, all dancing programme.

Retail

Plaques (£20), Blazer Badges (£15), ties (£10) are now ready, (Lapel Badges still doubtful). Members who have paid for items will now receive their orders. Members who have ordered, but not yet forwarded payment, should now do so (a few coppers towards postage would be appreciated).

REUNION WEEKEND

Thursday 30th September - For those travelling on the 30th, meet in Bar, Scarisbrick Hotel for pre-dinner drink, say 5.30 pm onwards.

Friday 1st October - For those booked in Scarisbrick, New Savoia and Balmoral Lodge, your personal envelopes (with all details) await your arrival. Those members booked elsewhere, pick up their personal envelopes on arrival at the Isherwood Suite, Scarisbrick Hotel. Reception at Isherwood Suite at 6 pm onwards. (Bar open 6 pm to midnight). Buffet at approximately 8 pm. Bar for residents after 12 pm in Residents' Lounge.

Saturday 2nd October - Bi-annual General Meeting at Scarisbrick Hotel, 10.45 am. Room to be announced later.

Banquet in Isherwood Suite. Reception 6 pm (Bar open 6 pm to midnight). Afterwards, Residents' Lounge (as per Friday).

Dinner served approximately 7.45 pm, music laid on.

Recollections of an Armaments Officer

From Basra to Sharjah as sole passenger on a Dutch ship, s.s. Tinambo, 2000 tons, to be disembarked over the side in a bosun's chair into a dugout canoe! That canoe epitomized the barren surroundings and primitive living conditions of Sharjah, sand bars, salt marsh, barusti huts, salt-water ablutions, etc. "Lots of flies" say the writings, but, as Mike remembers, there were few, it being too hot and/or too humid. You remember the barrack lament "I've got those Shaibah blues"? Sharjah personnel, if they could be spared, went on rest camp to Shaibah! The squadron role in the Persian Gulf and surrounds was anti-sub and escort of shipping busily moving war supplies northbound to Russia and southbound to the Far East build up. A successful role too, not a ship lost whilst 244-escorted and on 16.10.43 Sgt Pilot Chapman killed a German sub, U. 533, in the Gulf of Oman. The sole survivor, a handsome Aryan-type youth, and obviously very fit, was rescued by the RN some hours later and flown in to Sharjah for the squadron to see and was given a back-slapping reception. Most crews completed a tour of ops without seeing a sub, but that sortie was the Sgt's first op at Sharjah. He came out of clouds, saw the surfaced submarine, released his stick of 4x250lb depth charges andbingo! Except for a very minor signal procedure, it was a mode]. attack. Everyone on the station walked 10 feet high for some time, including the depth charge preparation team. Depth charges! Bisleys were prone to power loss - engine oiling up - so quite a number of depth charges had to be jettisoned, sometimes over land. The Political Agent would report Bedouin complaints and Mike hived off into the desert on a compass heading with guide and RAF Levy escort in a 4-wheel drive truck to destroy the ruptured stores. He was also responsible for three bomb dumps, pre-war sited at Ras al Hadd, lower down the Gulf of Oman, Masirah Island, down at the corner, and at Jask on the Persian side. So he flew around the Gulf quite a lot, arranging movements out of pre-war bomber stores and movements in of anti sub and recce stores. There being no harbours and lots of sand bars, handling was tedious, ship to shallow-draught dhows, dhows to small boats, canoes and human backs. At the Political Agent's behest, serviced an ancient collection of rifles, arms of the Sheikh's askaris, and obviously to the Sheikh's satisfaction because his headman then brought along for like treatment 24 SMLE rifles, butt stencilled "203 Sqdn". (203 - a flying boat squadron, Southampton, stationed at Basra pre-war.) Politeness forbade comment and service was duly rendered, The P.A.'s final request on armament services came at the squadron's move from Sharjah to Masirah, a parting gift to the Sheikh from 244 of 4x1248-round boxes of .303 inch ammunition, also duly rendered. Voyaged down the Gulf in s.s. Baroda, embarking 20.3.44. By then the squadron had Wellington 13s, and Catalinas, flown by Dutch ex KLM pilots, were already at Masirah, The move pleased everyone, more salubrious climate, better accommodation, island interest, superb surfing, Aussie-tutored (Squadron had Empire-mix aircrew personnel) and turtles egg laying on the beach by the 4-gallon petrol tin full. Scrambled turtles eggs were palatable, but not so turtle soup - maybe the cooks were not Savoy trained. The squadron had a washed-ashore, large, powered, ship's lifeboat and Mike provided three messes with a fish meal once or more a week, highly welcomed, especially barracuda. After all had tried their luck fishing with makeshift rods and spinner/hand lines, a depth charge primer, contents 1 lb 4 ozs composition exploding, with a plug of stiff grease in the detonator pocket to receive a commercial detonator crimped to a length of Bickford fuze, provided a quick means of assured fishing for the pot. Remarkably, RAF accounting and auditing of stores was still being used and an auditor's question asked "With one primer to each depth charge, how is it primer expenditure greatly exceeds depth charge expenditure?" The answer was "Due to adverse bomb dump storage conditions, x quantity primers were found to be U/S, were duly certified and destroyed under the recognised procedure of A. P. 2608A, Explosives Regulations". Bureaucracy was satisfied. Three HQs were responsible for different aspects of administration and operational control, Iraq & Persia, Aden and SEAC, org lines were wiggly and the resultant triplication of instructions varied between confusing, contradictory and hilarious, but the armoury's pet goat gave ready "action" to unwanted paper.

'Mike Kerrigan'

See you all at Southport

Jim and Don